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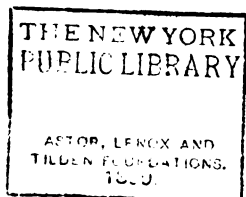
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CLAUDIA.
THE DAYS OF MARTYRDOM.

A Tale.



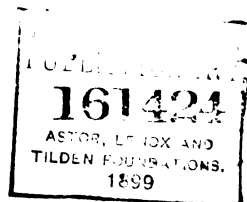
BY
A. M. GOODRICH.

"THEY SHALL BE AS THE STONES OF A CROWN, LIFTED UP AS AN ENSIGN
UPON HIS LAND."—ZECHARIAH ix. 16.

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TO THE
HONOURABLE AND REVEREND S. BEST,

THIS LITTLE POEM

IS

INSCRIBED

WITH MUCH RESPECT AND ESTEEM

BY

A. M. G.

CLAUDIA.

A.D. 257.

I.

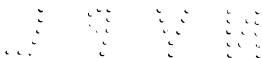
IN Antioch a Christian maiden dwelt,
And trod the paths of pleasantness and peace,
While peace to Christians was allowed. Fair, young,
Of birth patrician, and of ample wealth,
She early knew the grief of parents' loss.
Her mother she recalled not, scarce her sire,
Faint trace though memory wore, the portraiture
By fancy drawn with brightest tints was dyed.
Each lineament was beautiful, and oft
Weeping she gazed, and felt herself bereaved.
This drew her thoughts more upward to her GOD:—
“For if my heavenly FATHER I offend,
I am indeed alone. O! let me live
Here in my orphanhood such guileless life,
That when my parents recognize their child
Again before the Judgment Throne of GOD,

B

They shall smile on me with approving love!"
Thus earnestly she sought the path to heaven,
And meekly learning in the Christian Church,
In meekness practised all she there was taught.
Sweet Charity has not one office kind
That she left unperformed. Where sorrow dwelt,
Sickness or want, there came her frequent step ;
Well known to all who knew no other friend
Was Claudia, and by all alike revered
Her virgin presence. Pagans could not hate
Such virtue and such beauty, nor revile
One who but lived to bless. Calm, sweet her days
Till eighteen summers had passed o'er her head,
And still she gazed upon a sky serene,
For narrow the horizon which the eye
Of mortal foresight may command, and storms
Which over Antioch shall discharge their rage,
No awe-inspiring cloud as yet proclaimed.

A little child there was whom Claudia loved,¹
Oft in her arms had held, and when she sought
The Christian's house of prayer in days of peace
Within its courts had led. Oft near his couch

¹ See note A.



The maiden knelt, and evening hymns had sung,
And lulled him with melodious voice to sleep.
Thus, only thus, the Name of JESUS taught,
The infant loved Him with an infant's love.
Fearless of ill the little child revealed
The well of gladness gushing in his heart.
He spake of JESUS' love with fond delight,
Joyous as is the sparkling brooklet's voice
When bounding in its course o'er stone, and root
Of tree that drinks refreshment from its stream,
Pursuing its glad way through pastures fair.
He sang the words that Claudia's lips had sung
In his sweet dreams, and in his childlike sports,
Their meaning scarce discerned; by others read
With anger or contempt. His playmates scoffed,
And bid him play alone. No Christian child
Their gambols shall partake, for they have learned
To spurn a race whose name is linked with scorn.
In solitude thenceforth the infant strayed,
Yet wanted not a solace in lone hours.
He found it in his songs, his heavenly strains
Enchanted many an ear. His father, proud,
And proudest of his child, perceived him shunned,
The cause demanded angrily, and one
Of the reluctant throng, with cheek suffused,

And hesitating speech, at length presumed
To cast a slur on the Patrician's child;
And said, "Thy Cyril is a Christian grown."
Caspian in silence heard; no thunder cloud
Is blacker than the shadow on his brow.
Homeward he hastened, sought his child, who came
With mien that mortals dream the angels wear.
His loveliness the father touched; he caught
His babe unto his bosom, whispering :
"Tell me, my little Cyril, why no more
Among thy former playmates thou art seen ?
Say, art thou sick, and canst not share their sports,
Or have they angered thee ?"

The child replied :

"I know no cause save that I JESUS love."
"Why loves my child that Nazarene despised ?
My Cyril, thou art born of noble race,
Too young to value thine own excellence,
Thou must not herd with vile ones;" Caspian spoke
In measured tone. He would not scare his child
Who, nestling in his bosom, softly sang :—


"JESUS I love, the SAVIOUR mild,
Who dearly loves each little child ;

Whose eye is on us day and night,
He is the GOD of life and light.
His Blood He shed that we may live,
And we our hearts and lives must give.

“He bids young children to Him come,
His loving arms the infant’s home,
‘Of such My kingdom,’ He hath said,
‘And those in child-like ways that tread.’
We are His holy angels’ care,
They guard our steps from every snare.”

“Enough! thy babbling cease,” the father cried,
“Befitting well the creed by madmen taught.
Besotted idiots! Thus they lure a child,
Unwitting what it speaks, to praise their GOD!
Weak Deity to prize such worshippers!
No more offend mine ear!” The child replied
(For he was frightened by his father’s ire,
And faltering, could frame no other words;)
Still with his song. Then him stern Caspian drove
Forth from his roof—bid him an outcast be.
The gentle child a strict obedience paid,
He asked no shelter, and he sought no friend,
But some in charity his wants supplied.

Strange sternness in a father! but his hand
Has signed the missive that would Cæsar move
To send to Antioch Censors to uproot
The Christian faction which too long hath thriven,
Favoured by Macrianus, he who sways
Valerian's mind. The parasite now hates
The race he once approved. Their foes uprear
Their heads, and hail with joy the coming hour
To work them ill, and Caspian fain would crush
Timely the dangerous seed in Cyril's breast,
How sown he knows not, ere it bring forth fruit.
He never feared that one so softly trained,
So fondly loved, could harshness long endure.
He deemed to scare him from the parent nest,
Was but to lure him back;—that he must soon
Extend his suppliant hands with wailings such
As infants utter severed from the breast.
He had mis-read his child. No Cyril came.
Nor morn nor eve he sought the household board,
Nor yet his little couch. His mother yearned
To call him to his home, but was o'erruled
By one whose sway no rebel will allowed.
Their eyes were on him, they his movements knew,
Or thought they knew. They marked who solaced him,
And in each deed of kindness they discerned



Love for the child, or a like faith in CHRIST.
Whate'er the spring of charity it moved
In Apphia only deepest thankfulness.
In Caspian's heart wrath and suspicion held
A still uncertain war with gratitude.
Thus passed some days,—and did not Claudia haste
To lead the little outcast home, and be
To him the father, mother he had lost,
Making her GOD his GOD?—The Christian maid
Dared not enwrap him in her destiny.
Waiting, she prays and watches for a sign,
What GOD will have her do: but she provides
In secret for his needs, and ministers
By other hands, as unseen spirits do.

The judges came, and one was Caspian's friend.
He told him of his child, and sore bewailed
His stubbornness, so young and so resolved.
The experienced persecutor mused awhile:
“Let me deal with him, I'll bring back thy child.”
The father yielded trembling, for his heart
Misgave him, but the friendly counsellor
Laughed at his terrors, sought the judgment seat,
And bid his ministers the infant seek.

The previous eve had Cyril reached the shrine
Of Christian worship ; on the altar step
Had laid his homeless head, and fallen asleep,
Ere dawn sweet strains of music woke the child.
Christians are kneeling round him, and their hymn
Sounds to his ear familiar. 'Mid the throng
Claudia he sees, and near a little group
Arrayed in white, the Bishop Fabius stands,
Holy baptismal rites with speed preparing.
Then rose he from his resting place, and sought
With timid haste their side. All eyes were on him,
And some who knew him deemed that for that hour
His guardian angel thither brought the child.
He reverently observed whate'er was done¹
By his companions, and each act and word
He meekly followed. When they thrice renounced
Satan and sin, his pomps, his shows, his works,
He too renounced. When to the east they turned,
From darkness unto light, with eyes and hands
In adoration lifted, Cyril too
Turned with them, and his infant hands upraised,
And in a Triune GOD confession made
Three times with them. Fabius, admiring paused,

¹ See note B.

And turning to the assembled Christians, asked :
“ What hinders that this child baptized be ? ”
Claudia advancing, spake her willingness
To be his sponsor, and her knowledge told
Of all that he hath suffered for CHRIST’S sake,
And scarce an eye but moistened was with tears
To hear the tale. Then Fabius having asked
Some simple questions touching his belief,
And heard his just replies, the sacred rites
Received completion as the daylight dawned.
But ere his flock depart, the bishop spake
Brief words of love and warning unto all,
For persecution is at hand, and all
Who here their SAVIOUR have confessed, may soon
Be called to be confessors ’mid the flames.
Thus spake good Fabius, and unwillingly
His eye on Cyril fell, and was bedimmed
By momentary grief. The pang is o’er—
He thought upon the Innocents—the first
Who shed their blood for JESUS, Who thus gave
First unto babes deep token of His love.
The Christians then dispersed ; on every brow
Was solemn thought. Some wore a lofty mien
Of resolution fixed, and there were cheeks
That glowed, and eyes that beamed as in the hour

Of joyful expectation ; and some moved
More meekly onward, and with downcast looks,
Yet raised their hearts and thoughts as near to Heaven
As those who seemed to scorn the earth they trod,
And not less kindly on them Fabius looked—
Most hopefully—most trustfully, perchance.
All have departed. Claudia clasps the hand
Of the dear child, whom now she deems her own ;
Beneath her veil her silent tears are falling,
While he, in voice of fondness, not complaint,
Half whispers, as they walk towards Antioch :
“ I did not know thou lovedst me still so well,
I feared I had displeased thee : others sought
Me out with kindness who had never known,
And thou didst seek me not. My heart with joy
Leaped when thou ledd'st me to the holy font.
Surely if thou didst blame thy little Cyril
Thou didst believe him there washed clean from sin ?”
Claudia essayed in vain to answer him,
Emotion choked her utterance, and the child
Watched silently the tremor strong that passed
Over her frame, half frightened, half perplexed.
Whence this strange passion came he did not ask,
Nor sought to win her to another mood
By infantine caress, as was his wont.

Near to the town they pass a sacred spot,¹
Where buried lay the holy Babylas,
The martyr who had perished in his chains,
And bid them in his grave his fetters lay.
Beside him sleep three Acolytes who drank
Of wisdom from his lips, and thence the cup
Of Martyrdom they drained. When Claudia reached
The tomb of Babylas, the children's graves,
She stopped, and falling on her knees, she cast
Her arms round Cyril, drew him 'neath her veil,
And bathed him with her tears, and fondly kissed.
"Ne'er hast thou given offence, thou heavenly child,
Ne'er moved one thought save that of love in me ;
'Twas for thy safety that I stood aloof,
But when I saw thee seek the SAVIOUR's arms
I dared no longer linger, but I sprang
To place thee on His breast, secure from ill,
Whate'er betide." The child looked up and smiled :
" Now am I happy, though I see thy tears—
Wilt thou not dry them ? Wherefore do they flow ?—
Save 'tis for joy, that I am this day made
The Child of God. Dear Claudia, never morn
Was bright as this to me ; the song of birds,

¹ See note C.

The flowers we tread, were never half so sweet,
I cannot weep with thee, I am so glad !”
Then Claudia dared not mar his joy with tears,
But meekly raising her soft eyes to heaven,
Implored the Comforter, Who, through the bars
Of Babylas’ dark prison light inspired,
To shine within their hearts.

Onward they moved,
And at the city gate encountered men,
Who, recognizing Cyril, forced the maid
To yield him to their charge ; and they forbid
That she should follow him with anxious love,
But counselled her to hasten to her home
And there abide. Nor did they counsel ill ;
To criminate the child not their design,
They asked not whence he came, nor would permit
Any suspected one to join his steps.

Before the judgment seat the infant stood
Adorned with that most lovely innocence,
That air of pure devotion, children wear

When their young hearts are touched with heavenly love.
All men were moved. Not yet the stream of blood
Had flowed which causes thirst unslakeable,
Delight in horror, and fierce lust of crime.
Remote from view, the restless father heard
Each word that passed, each tone and gesture marked.
The judge began : " Behold in me, dear child,
Thy father's ancient friend. Ne'er since thy birth
My foot hath crossed the threshold of thy home,
And thus we neither know each other's face ;
Thou ne'er hast gambolled with me, climbed my knee ;
Yet do I love thee well for Caspian's sake,
And I must have thy confidence and love.
It grieves me sore to find that child like thee,
Having received due training, fondest care,
Can wound his parents' bosoms, and presume
To set at nought their lessons. What vain dreams
Can have possessed thee, boy ? 'Tis time to wake.
What ! Dost thou love to wander through the streets,
An orphan homeless, portionless, and fed
By pity's hand, soon wearying of her task ?—
Then mayst thou die of hunger, and the while
Thy father's slaves lack nought. The inclement sky
Thy roof, the palace theirs ; bare earth thy bed.
Nay, hasten home, thy father fond recalls,

And thou shalt be again his pride and joy.
Thy pallid cheek, thy failing limbs betray
Thy languishment for happiness and home—
Thy mother pines upon a sleepless couch,
Go soothe her, play around her. For thy step
Her loving ear is listening—Cyril, go!"

In accents of deep pathos spake the child:
"Tell not their tenderness, I may not love
Father or mother more than my dear LORD;
Speak not of houses built with hands, on high
CHRIST hath prepared my dwelling, and will grant
Even to me, a feeble child, a place
Among His angels. Do not pity me,
And do not me upbraid."

"Poor child! Thou'rt mad!

I must rebuke this folly. Bear him hence,
Show him the sword—the flame—the Christian's choice."
He was obeyed, and Caspian shuddering heard,
Sickened with terror, sought the judge's side,
And bid him no more argue with the child,
But yield him back to him. "I'll bear him home,
Due chastisement inflict. Debarred from light
From parent, and from playmate, and from fare
Save of the homeliest—'neath such rigours, soon

He shall abjure the cause of his offence.”
The judge was obdurate, the more resolved
To perfect what he had commenced, and break
The infant’s stubborn spirit to his will :
He reasoned with parental fears, and said
It was impossible he should not yield.
Delirium threatened Caspian’s brain ; he heard
The voice of Apphia bidding them desist,
And calling him the murderer of his child.
He groaned impatiently ; he bit his lip
Till the blood flowed, rejoicing in the pain.
He had rushed forth, but that they held him there,
Nor loosed him e’en to greet his coming child.
The guards proclaimed that Cyril mocked the sword,
Defied the flames, and stoutly did rebel
Against the friendly hands that plucked him back.
The judge alarmed, would have forbid their tale,
But, rising from his seat, his stern colleague
Who knew not Caspian, and whose bigot heart
A mild expedient never yet devised,
Now interposed, and gravely weighed their words.
The wretched father saw his child involved
In danger imminent ; burst from the hold
Of those who would restrain him, cast him down
Before the judge’s throne, there pouring out

The passion of his soul, and uttering threats
If any dared approach with thought of harm.
Meanwhile he clasped his infant to his breast
With tenderness surpassing aught he e'er
In safer hour had shown. Yet even thus
He sealed his Cyril's doom; gathered black clouds
On angry Casca's brow: "May we permit,
On this our first day's mission, brother, say,
These words of rank rebellion? Who shall dare
Dictate to us our conduct—snatch away
Ere we pronounce their doom, or child or man
Summoned by us before the judgment bar?—
Then be this boy a Christian, he must die."
"Christian I am," exclaimed the fearless child,
"This morning on my brow was signed the Cross
Which CHRIST once bore for me, and then I vowed
To be His faithful soldier. All men know
Soldiers must welcome death, and I will die."
Caspian upraised his hand: "Thou sinful child,
Black hath thy heart grown since that fatal day
When Christians first beguiled thee. Wouldst thou kill
Thy miserable parents?"

"Bear away
That frantic man," was Casca's stern command.

“ Dear father, turn aside thine eyes from me,
Or quell their fierce reproach—I dare not look
Upon thy grief. O! would thou couldst rejoice
With me. One little hour—thy child shall pray
For thee in Heaven; forgive him here on earth.
O! speak my pardon ere they drag thee hence.”
One look of mingled tenderness and ire
He cast upon his suppliant child; then turned
With sudden calmness, and commanding mien
Unto his fellow nobles, gathered round:
“ Are ye patricians? stand ye thus at bay,
One of your number see these hounds drag down,
Nor spring to rescue from their murderous fangs
A harmless infant, who with simple lips
His own, his sole accuser is? permit
This barbarous act, no more your household gods
Will guard your homes from ill. This cannot be,
To slay a child! O, shame! Draw, draw your swords,
And follow me who will—I look around
On faces of the friends of earliest youth.
Here one stern stranger sets us all at nought:
What, silent, motionless—ye gods, I rave—
This scene is frenzy’s dream, all, all, unreal,
And ye are not my friends, nor this my child,
Nor this a judgment seat!”

“’Tis true thou ravest,”
Harsh Casca answered, “when thou wouldst defy
The power of Censor to perform the will
Of his and thine Imperial Lord. Beware.—”
Caspian scarce heeded these imperious words,
He only marked what crushed all hope to death,
No sword unsheathed, no voice upraised to save.
The blackness of despair o’erspread his brow,
Each angry vein swelled high, his speech was choked,
He turned and fell, forth from his mouth there gushed
A torrent of dark blood—yet life abides,
And still his languid eye his Cyril seeks.
They bear him thence. Wild with affright the child
With agonizèd prayer for death implored,
And Casca’s act, despite his will, became
A deed of mercy when he granted—death.

II.

’Twas night ere Claudia ventured from her home,
Knowing too well the day’s dark history.
Yet mourns she not because the child she clasped
This morning to her heart, is now in heaven;
Mourns not although she weeps. His infant songs

Are sounding in her ears—'twere vain to try
To silence, had she wished it, the sweet strain.
O! could she catch the tones of seraph choir
'Mong which his voice is ringing! her fond heart
Whispers: "ere sets another sun most like
Thou shalt behold him!" She may well predict
Her doom thus sealed, for now she issues forth
Bent to infringe the merciless decree
That Christian corpse no burial rite shall find.
She yearns to yield some office fond of love
To her dear child, who when the judges doomed
And stern men slaughtered him, no comfort met
In her soft streaming eyes, or tender tones.
And though 'twas sole obedience held her back
To warnings which declared her presence fatal,
She feels as owing him atonement still.
With memory of Cyril mingled thoughts,—
High theme of many a meditation past,—
Of dying for her GOD, of yielding all
To Him Who is her all—forsaking earth
Without one weak regret, and winning heaven.
Panting with hope, her heart breathes forth its prayer
For grace to yield the sacrifice of love—
"Make Thine own gift acceptable in me!"
Heavenward the maiden raised her eyes, and gazed

Wrapt in her vision on the starry vault.
Tempests obscured it. Swiftly sped the clouds
Across the moon; their hurried course inspired
None of that deep tranquillity of soul
Drank in 'neath sky serene in night's still hour,
From the mild tide of radiance shed around,
But rather dread indefinite of change,
Of peril, insecurity, and fear,
And mournfully foreboding, Claudia marked
Here the meet emblem of her menaced Church.
"Set in a cloudless sky, what fairer type
Hath she than is the moon so mildly bright,
Deriving her effulgence from the sun,
As doth the Church from CHRIST! When earth-born
 mists
As now obscure her face, and shear her beams,
Dimming to faithful watchers her pure light,
Their hope and guide through life's drear wilderness,
What else is left them but to wait and pray
Till suddenly she cleaves the darkest cloud
And pours new streams of glory on their path!
How hot the sciroc blows, the desert sweeping—
No balmy breath from heaven to nerve my limbs,
Yet must I on. Perchance this murky hour
Best suits my purpose, unperceived to glide

And from the lion, gorged and sleeping, steal
The captured fawn—Nay, e'en this darkness fails
Thus to befriend me. I approaching see
A human form,—'tis but a woman—veiled—
Like me alarmed she backward shrinks—her aim
Perchance is mine. What other can have led
So near this hateful spot? I will remove
Her torturing fears, and comfort with the thought
Of a companion in her pious deed.”
Still blacker grew the darkness as the maid
Advanced to greet the stranger, whispering low,
Lest sentinel at hand should catch the sound.
“Thou art a sister Christian hither come
To snatch the sacred dead from touch profane.
Now let us join our hands, a work commence
That hath GOD's blessing. Guardian angels near
From ill shall shield us, for it is not ill
Danger to meet or death, if grace give strength
To pass th' ordeal. Uncounted not the cost
We here resort. To-morrow may bestow
The lofty guerdon of the flame or sword
To recompense our zeal.”

Trembling the hand
By Claudia clasped, and no reply broke forth

Like her's enraptured from the lips of one
Who seemed half sinking, or with grief or fear.
"Now lean on me, my sister," said the maid,
By pity moved. "Thou hast o'ertasked thy strength."
"I fain would seek," the woman faltered forth,
"The child who died this morn, but I despair
Almost of strength to compass my design."—
"Tis mine especially," the maiden cried,
"For this sole purpose turned I here my steps.
He died all ripe for Heaven! How blest our lot
To minister in aught to one so pure!
O, sister, dry these tears—or be they shed,
Not for sweet Cyril, but his murderers.
For madmen in their sin we well may weep,
But his blest spirit who would bind to earth?"
A strong convulsive throb passed o'er the frame
Of her who listened, this her choked reply,
"I am the wretched mother of the child!"
"Not wretched, though bereavèd," Claudia said.
"God hath thy child!" E'en as she spake the word
The moon's bright rays burst through her shroud and fell
Full on the maiden clad in garments white,
Pouring such radiance round her, that she looked
An angel bringing tidings of great joy.
Revealed to each they stood. O'er Apphia's face

Stole doubt, resolving into certainty.

"Ah! thou it was that stolest my infant's heart.

Yes—now I know it all. Thy Syren songs

At eve, their purport noted not by me,

And thy beguiling kisses were for this!

Thou, having lured him from his home, didst leave

The helpless wanderer in the streets, nor proved

Mother to him thou hadst orphaned; fearing there

To work him all the ill thy heart designed,

Beyond the city's precincts didst thou lead,

And marked him out for death. Much have I heard

Of Christian wickedness. This passes all!

O, may the gods avenging us, blast thee

With all thou darest most—dishonour, death!"

Claudia heard meekly, melting into tears

To see such bitterness of grief, and said,

In accents soft and clear, "I marked him out

For death, yet do not loathe me, nor reject

My words. Why am I here? It is to die

For him whom first I trained for endless life.

I may not hope with decency to lay

His limbs within the grave, wrapt in this robe

Of spotless white, this linen fine and pure,

The righteousness of saints, nor shed my blood,

Which I will yield them gladly." As she spoke

She drew the snowy vestment from her breast,
By her own hands prepared, and in the light
Of the majestic moon, before the eyes
Of Apphia held it, kneeling at her feet.
"Thou shalt not die for him," the mother said,
"That the sole joy life yet reserves for me.
With thee I will not share it. Wherefore wouldst
Thou perish? What strange madness doth possess
All of thy creed? Thou couldest not love and slay
My Cyril—Why then die for him? If death
Was thy heart's sole desire, why didst thou not
Seek it alone, and leave to us our child?
Begone, nor grieve me with thy hated presence."
"O, let me stay to tell how I could love
Yet slay thy Cyril. Not with these hands I slew,
Nor ever could. I did but teach him truths
That won from earth, and bore him up to Heaven.
We Christians count as nought whate'er our LORD
Demands of us. To die we hold as gain,
And willingly I undertake this task,
The last assigned to me on earth, for life
Shall be its cost, and life I joyful yield.
Yes, I will robe me for my martyrdom,
And tell the hours before my coming doom,
As thou perchance didst ere thy bridal day.

O! could I win thy soul to share the bliss
Which swells my bosom here on earth, in Heaven
Attunes thy Cyril's song. Thou shouldst rejoice
And see him fairer far, and far more blest
Than e'er thine eye beheld, or love could make him."
"Ah! might I dream this vision sweet as fond!"
"Ah! could'st thou yield thy faith to truths divine.
Beneath the Cross a Virgin mourned her Son,
If the mild JESUS asked His Mother's tears,
May He not thine require? Know that for us
He hath wept tears of blood. Hear how He taught
While 'mid our griefs He tarried, what in store
His mercy holds. 'The Resurrection I,
And I the Life. Whoso believes in Me
Hath everlasting life.'—Thy child believed—"
"And died," said Apphia bitterly. "Waste not
This precious hour. I go to seek my boy."
She neither spurned the maiden from her side,
Nor thanked her for her silent services,
Nor spoke one word of love or loathing more.
'Neath the pale moonshine soon they found the spot
Where Cyril lay, as tranquil as in sleep.
But not alone he fell on that dread day
When persecution first to Antioch came.
Death lay around in ghastly forms; in him,

But for the gaping wound above his heart
And crimsoned robe, they had not thought it death.
Claudia's first impulse was to kiss his brow,
But she restrained the wish thinking, perchance,
His mother would withdraw him from her touch
With an abhorring thrill.—She stood aloof,
While Apphia raised the child and in her arms,
Silently, swiftly carried him beyond
The accursed bounds,—but Claudia lingered still,
For while she watched the fond maternal deed,
Not wholly was her own heart satisfied,
Nor all her mind absorbed. She grieved to think
Of Cyril's grave by heathen rite profaned,
And with indignant sorrow she reflects
How many a Christian yet must burial lack.
Still as she gazes grows the generous wish
To brave extremest danger, and attempt
To bear one slaughtered saint away, nor quit
The bloody field unburthened. As she mused
Her eye discerned the corpse of aged priest,
Well known and well beloved. Stooping, she raised
His grey head from the dust, and tenderly
Upon her shoulder placed it, and rejoiced
To find that she could rise beneath the weight,
And totter onwards slowly in the path

By Apphia fleetly sped—she clasped her prize,
But not, alas! unmarked the pious deed.
The sentinels aroused them from their sleep,
And tracked with steps uncertain through the gloom,
The faltering fugitive who could not long
Defy or baffle their pursuit. They seize
The maiden roughly. “Not alone,” they cry,
“Canst thou have ventured thus. Thy comrades where?
Persist not in thy silence—there’s the rack
For those who will not speak. When breath returns
Confess what cowards came with thee and fled?”
“I am alone,” said Claudia, “in my aim
And in its execution, and prepared
Alone to meet its punishment.” “’Tis vain
To tell a tale so false and wild, for see
Where other of the guard a woman bring,
Captured like thee, bearing like thee her dead.”
Scared by her fear and grief while Apphia stood
Clasping her child, the dauntless maid replied:
“Yet have I spoken truth. She did not share
My purpose, but disclaims, abhors, like you,
The motives that impel me. Ask herself.
The law you would enforce is solely framed
’Gainst Christians. Wreak on me your utmost wrath.
She is no Christian, but a mother fond.

Can laws uproot *her* feelings? Ask the judge,
Would he forbid the mother of his child,
Or his own mother thus to mourn the dead?"

"Tis true," cried Apphia, "Nature's sacred laws
Alone have brought me forth to seek my child."
"She is the wife of Caspian. All who dwell
In Antioch know that proud Patrician name,"
Again urged Claudia. "Be ye warned betimes,
Now foreign tyrants o'er the city rule,
But they will soon depart. If you molest
Those who were great, and will be great again
When former days return, their vengeful wrath
Will surely overtake you—Let her go."

"It cannot be, our duty was to guard
The bodies of the slain: you have plucked hence
Two of the number, and we must convey
Such bold offenders to the judgment seat."

"I can reward you nobly," Apphia cried,
"Take freely of my gold." "Both to release
Perchance you dare not," Claudia calmly said;
"One victim might suffice." The ruffians heard
Then went aside a little way, and spoke
Among themselves, moved but by thirst of gold;
For though the maiden's utter disregard
Of doom so terrible as waits the crime

Which she hath dared to perpetrate, amazed,
It did not touch their hearts. They reasoned thus :
“ The maid is Christian—that her frenzy proves,
The other weeping, trembling woman there
But what she says, a mother, wild with woe.”
“ And Caspian’s wife, I know her well,” rejoined
A second, “ let us take her gold, and bid
Her hence depart, with vow of secrecy.”
So saying, turned they where the women stood.
The Christian virgin no impatience shows
To know her fate, no dread of it unknown,
Majestically calm she bides their time.
Conflicting feelings torture Apphia’s breast,
The little corpse of Cyril in her arms
She frantic strains, which sooner than resign
She on their spears would bleed, Claudia she views
With awe and wonder, and with secret shame.

Their purpose once declared, the soldiers seize
The unresisting maid, with hasty words
Apphia dismiss, nor heed her faint-breathed prayer.
“ One only we release—is’t not enough
That we thy trespass cover? Hasten home.”
She fled on terror’s wings, her costly prize
Clasped to her heart, yet in her flight pursued

By thought of Claudia's strange serenity.
Who begged her life, she leaves to die alone,
Condemns the coward deed, yet onward hastes.

III.

WHEN Claudia stood before the Censor's throne,¹
Her youth, her beauty, and her noble birth,
The high esteem in which all Antioch held her
For many a generous act, and love and care
Of her poor citizens, for pardon plead.
But flagrant the offence of which she stands
Accused, and fearlessly by her avowed.
O! where are those who best might sue for her
Who sues not for herself?—The poor she fed,
Lodged, clothed;—the sick she nursed,
E'en plague-struck wretches whom their friends forsook,
And those who weeping near their dead have seen her
Glide in, angelical, with piteous love,
Bringing them linen garments by her hands
Prepared in reverence for that lifeless clay,

¹ See Note E.

Which she believes again from death shall rise.
Her capture known, these quickly throng around,
Some dumb with selfish fears, some speak with zeal.
“ Why must she die for this accustomed deed
Of piety ? full oft hath she bestowed
Raiment and sepulture upon the dead,
And all have loved and praised her. Why this change ?”
“ Peace, peace, my friends, I knew that I must give
My life a prey. Leave me to meet my doom.”
Thus spake the maid.

“ It is not possible,”
Observed her milder judge, (full fain to spare
The virgin’s life, for in his heart he shared
Her tender pity for the slaughtered child ;)
“ That thou couldst bear in interval so brief
Two bodies from the field, and one inter,
And this unaided—We must further prove
This marvellous tale.”

“ No marvels do I tell,
I was by sentinels o’erta’en and seized
When bearing home the shattered corpse of one
Whose grey hairs might have quelled your violence ;
He was my dear instructor, whom in life—

Then wherefore less in death?—I revered.
What need of further questions? here's enough
To mark me for your victim."

" 'Twas an act
Presumptuous, disobedient, most unwise,
But, Claudia, hear us," (still 'twas Gallus spoke,)
"Thy youth we pity, and respect the fame
Thou bearest throughout Antioch. Confess
Who the accomplices that led thee on,
Who stole the infant's body, and thy life
We yet may grant, if thou wilt pardon ask
And prove thy penitence by sacrifice
To Cæsar. 'Tis his law thou hast infringed."
"To Cæsar? to a mortal sacrifice?¹
I never had accomplices. Alone
I issued from my dwelling, and alone
Had there returned, but I was captive made."
"Claudia, look forth, to yonder waving wood
Of Daphne look—The myrtle-scented air
Breathe freely once again, gaze on the sky
So deeply blue, and hear Orontes' voice:
Wilt thou forsake this loveliness of life

¹ See Note F.

For ice-cold death? Is it not sweet to breathe
And to behold the light?"

"Ay, it is sweet,
And I with grateful heart these gifts of GOD
Have still enjoyed, nor do I now resign
In proud contempt. Obedient to His will
I lay down life, and charms of earth exchange
For light of Heaven, and breath of Paradise."
"What God dost thou adore? Thou speakest of light
And yet thou mockest at its origin.
Go, seek Apollo's shrine, and worship there."
"Yon glorious orb of day that GOD created
Whom I adore. The countless stars of heaven,
The fulness of the earth are His alone.
We are the work of His Almighty hand,
And all that He hath done is known to us
In JESUS CHRIST His SON."

"Cease these vain words,"
Cried Gallus, half in pity, half in scorn.
"Alas! and are they vain? Would I could move
Your stubborn hearts, and bend to Christian truth!"
"Nay!" cried a mocking voice from out the crowd,
"Make us not Christians, lest we burn for it."

"Poor timid wretch ! think on eternal flames
Before thou tremblest at what man can do."
Stern Casca interposed : "Her crime is proved,
And that she hath accomplices but adds
A deeper guilt which still she aggravates,
Their names refusing to disclose ; I see
No need of further parley. Bear her hence,
And be the stake prepared."

Prompt to obey,
The lictors seize the maid, but suddenly
The crowd divides, an eager hum is heard—
'Tis wonder, expectation, hope, and fear.
The Vestal Priestess comes, Laodice.¹
She moves majestic, with a swan-like state,
Gesture, and step, and eye proclaim her one
Whose will hath ever known submission prompt.
Awful the beauty of her brow severe.
Snow-white her vestments, and her purple robe
Hung graceful o'er one shoulder, leaving free
The other arm which now on high she raised
To check the lictors' progress. Her dark eye
Flashed through her raven tresses ; her curled lip,

¹ See Note G.

Her kindled cheek, all of displeasure tell
With pity not unmixed; and in a tone
That trembled with emotion 'gainst her will,
The haughty virgin spoke: "I may not claim
My privilege to set the victim free
Whose path to death I cross. I cannot plead
That without intervention of my will
The gods have on my mercy cast this maid.
But by the high esteem ye owe me all
And by your reverence for my spotless truth
I crave your leave to speak with her awhile,
Ere she proceed. Our city hath she graced
With beauty, purity, and noble deeds,
A higher name befitting than the one
She most unwisely chose. Then let me strive
To turn her from her errors, she may prove
Yet worthy to adorn our virgin band."
"Laodice must never plead in vain;
But we forewarn thee all thy generous care
Will unavailing prove. Thou dost not know
The stubbornness of this corrupted race,
Nor how they love the darkness more than light,
As prove their midnight revels, when they make
Such sacrifice as shuns the eye of day."
Impatient of expostulation, waved

Laodice her hand; to Claudia turned,
Speaking in tones meant solely for her ear,
Swift, yet distinct, kind, yet contemptuous too.
“Lost maid, thy judges I can well believe
No terms have proffered that thy dignity
Can stoop to accept, nor arguments employed
That move a soul like thine. I urge thee not
In abject terror to escape from death;
But turn from falsehood’s downward path; begin
A course more worthy of thy high desert
Than thou hast trodden yet: I’d have thee be
The fairest pearl in Vesta’s diadem.”
“I am a Christian virgin; earth can yield
No higher name for me.”

“O! how can one
So pure the ignominy brook that stains
The name of Christian? Can a lofty soul
Thirsting for true nobility e’er slake
Its thirst at stream impure?”

“Laodice,
I answer no. But taste thyself the fount
At which from infancy my lip hath drunk;
Its crystal waters soon shalt thou pronounce

Purer than any owning earthly source.
Drink of the well of life."

" More chaste, more true,
More honoured than Laodice canst thou
Pretend to be ? What higher aim or praise
Wouldst thou aspire to ?"

" I have loftier aims
Than any that lay claim to earthly honour,
And sweeter accents in mine ears resound
Than hum of the applauding multitude
Who hail thee in the gaudy theatre,
And yield the highest place."

" What are thine aims,
And what this looked for praise that sweetens death ?"
" My aim is heaven, and the high praise I seek
To hear the voice of GOD, in that dread day
When all to judgment rise, proclaim ' Well done,
Thou good and faithful servant, enter thou
Into thy Master's joy.' O ! highest praise !
Before the assembled universe bestowed
When all approving angels shout for joy !—
Noble Laodice, how wilt thou brook

In that great day to hide thy head in shame ?
O ! here defy the senseless scoff of pride,
Renounce thine empty honours, seek with me
The crown that martyrs cast before the throne
Of the most Holy One in highest Heaven !”

It was a strife for Angels to regard
With deepest interest, when thus for truth
The Christian and the Pagan virgins held
Their altercation. Both alike were moved
By love and by compassion. Both revered
A virtue in the other, which alike
Each deemed by error's mists obscured ; but here
Ceased the resemblance, for the haughty heathen
Each moment waxed more wrathful, while the heart
Of Claudia filled with love, and she would fain
Have laid her life in torment down to win
Her rival's ear to truth. No light from heaven
Burst o'er the proud soul of Laodice,
Vanquished, perplexed, but most incensed to find
That one she came to pity, pitied her,
Arrayed in all her honours, feared by all
Save by this one despised Nazarene.
She quelled her rising passion, for her soul
Loved not to trample on the weak, and cried

With high disdain, "I leave thee to thy fate,
For well I see thy frenzy is confirmed."
"Nay," Claudia said, "come and behold my death,
What my weak speech hath failed of, even now
The grace of patience, heaven bestowed, may work."
Amazed the Priestess heard, but turned away,
Sickening with horror, and the maid moved on
To the appointed spot, where to the stake
They bound her beauteous limbs. Her golden hair
She drew around her like a sheltering garb,
Then raised her eyes to heaven.

The clang was heard

Of armed horsemen rushing through the gate,
And one, their leader, brandishing his sword,
Spurred on his steed among the gaping crowd;
Foam on its bit, and streaked its flanks with gore.
They shrank on every side in fear, and knew
The Consul's son, young Marcus, fierce in war,
At home impetuous, and his law his will;
Yet well beloved, for still the poor man's friend
His ardent, generous nature bid him prove.
"Unbind the maiden," now he hoarsely cried,
Breathless well nigh, his voice with anger choked;
"For if one ruffian dare the pile to fire

His blood shall quench the flame. Can ye not hear,
Or dare ye to dispute what I command?
Who rules, if Marcus rules not, here in Antioch?
When I went hence my father's sway was owned,
And shall not now be scorned while thus I back
My gallant charger, have my sword in hand
Which never yet drank blood of citizen,
But straight shall drink it. Guards, cut ye the cords
There—to my father's palace lead the maid,
In my apartments place her. Tell my slaves
Their heads are forfeit if she be not there
When I arrive. Now tell me, sullen hounds,
Where I most promptly may Severus find?
My father scarce will grace the council-hall
While these intruders sit."

He gave small heed
To their reply, following with eager looks
The soldiers who led Claudia: then he spurred
His horse again, and quickly overtook
Their band, nor would he quit the maid until
The palace gate had safely shut her in.
But Marcus' warm compassion little shared
The slavish train within. Their zeal was hot
Against the Christians, for they joyed to find

A race more abject than their own, and men
Whom all might injure with impunity.
They took the beauteous maid who inly wailed
Deliverance from death and heaven delayed.
They thrust her in a dungeon, damp, obscure,
Nor brought her food nor raiment, but with words
Of foulest injury and coward gibes
Left her, not daring further to pursue
Their dark malignancy, unknown as yet
What fate awaits her, but these wretches hope
The sun will never lighten path for her
Save one which leads to death, and Claudia breathes
No prayer that may defeat their fierce desire.

IV.

THE outraged maiden sat upon the ground,
Her golden tresses loosened all to form
A shining veil about her. Pale her cheek
And lip. With Parian marble vied her skin
So exquisitely pure and polished, now
Almost as colourless and cold. Fatigue,
And lack of food, and torturing dread of ills
She dared not think of, and delay of all

She hoped beyond the grave bowed down her soul,
And nature craved repose ; but her dark eyes
Were wide dilated, and in vain she pressed
The palms of her cold hands upon their lids
Striving to close them ; many hours had passed
Since she had lost in sleep the sense of pain.

She heard approaching steps ; her prison door
Was open thrown, the tide of light gushed in,
Piercing her aching eyes, and sudden pain,
Not terror, forced her to conceal her face.
Sad her condition, yet she did not feel
Herself forsaken nor companionless.
Her clear perception of the Invisible,
Her loving confidence in GOD, her faith
That guardian angels compassed her around,
Were in themselves protection. So secure,
She seemed of succour, ruffians 'gan to doubt
Their power to harm. But in young Marcus' soul
There lurked no thought of ill, and he approached
With not less awe than love to seek the maid.
In anger he beheld her state forlorn :
" Who my behest thus misinterpreted ?
This noble virgin cast in noisome cell,
When fairest chamber of my palace is not

Worthy her presence?—What audacious slave
Hath thus my purpose mocked? Seize him and scourge.”
Claudia felt instant pity for the wretch
Who trampled on her helplessness, and now
Crouched abjectly before his wrathful lord.
“O, spare him, noble Marcus! for his stripes
Cannot but grieve me further. Punishment
For this he scarce deserves. This deed would win
Praise in the forum, and he thought from thee.”
“Then let him learn his error.” “Nay, forbear.
So small the boon that thou mayst grant it, e’en
To one despised as I am.”

Marcus gazed

Admiring on her face which as she spoke
With ardour glowed, and cried, “Fair Claudia, ask
Some boon that proves my willingness to please.”
As yet the maiden hath not shrunk as now
She shrinks from Marcus’ gaze. He turned in haste,
And issued his commands, that straight a bath
They should prepare, where she her weary limbs
Might for refreshment lave, then richest robes,
Such as do honour to her beauty, bring,
Then lead her to the hall, where he awaits
Her presence at his banquet. Claudia hears,

Indignant blushes mantle to her brow.
"O, leave me in this dungeon least abhorred
Of any spot beneath this gilded roof."
And as she spoke impatiently she struck
The ground with her slight foot; but, Marcus gone,
Deaf to expostulation every ear,
And she refrained from speech that mockery moved.
Her way-soiled garments she refused to change
For costly ones they brought her, but compelled
To choose, then took she one of virgin white,
That shrouded most her beauteous form, and veiled
E'en her fair face from view. Thus robed she moved
At their command towards the banquet hall,
And as she crossed the threshold, pressed her hand
Against her heart, beating like caged bird,
And strove unto the utmost to appear
As fearless as before the judgment seat.
What shall she here encounter? Nought but love,
And sweetest strains of most heart thrilling music,
And fragrant odours of perfumes and flowers
Strewn 'neath her feet, and boys as Cupids fair
With myrtle crowned, to wait upon her movements.
Marcus her entrance watched with eager eye;
He sprang to greet and lead her to a couch
Beside the board with viands spread, but she

The invitation slighted, and remained
Standing in silence, while the festal song
And dance her presence welcomed. Then his heart
Misgave him that the scene was ill devised.
His lofty brow was knit with angry frown,
And every muscle of his face betrayed
A mind disturbed. Impatiently he clapped
His hands to check the sounds which jarred the ear
They were designed to please. In vain he strove
The easy grace that marked his usual speech
Now to command. "O, noble Claudia! deign
To be my honoured guest. This weary day
At length hath reached its term, and thou must need
Refreshment and repose. I know with shame
That in my absence thou hast lacked of all
My poor abode could offer, but its lord
Unwillingly offended, humbly sues
For thy most precious pardon; be it shown
By now partaking of his proffered fare."
"For these thy kind intents my thanks are due,"
She said with more than maidenly reserve,
Yet without sternness, for too fair her face,
Too musical her voice such mood to speak.
"Save bread and water nought may pass my lips.
In peace we Christians keep a frugal fare,

And ill it would become me now to feast,
When many of my people drink the cup
Of martyrdom, and eat affliction's bread;
A lot I soon must share." "O, beauteous maid!"
Marcus exclaimed, "be ever far from thee
A fate so terrible, so undeserved!
Thinkest thou I snatched thee from the funeral pyre,
Favoured by gods more merciful than thine,
And know not now to guard thy precious life?
Dismiss these odious fears. Repose thy limbs
On yon soft couch, and let me bring thee food,
Thy failing strength must need the gen'rous wine."
"Nay, all I can partake of I have said,
Nor deem that thou bestowest a trifling gift,
In bringing to this parchèd lip a draught
Of water pure."

As she the goblet took
His eye pursued her lifted hands, and marked
How deep the cords had cut them. Her slight wrists
Were circled as it were by scarlet bands.
Moved with indignant pity, Marcus sprang,
Snatched from the board a bowl of costly metal,
Bidding a slave to pour therein with haste
An odorif'rous water. Then he took

The maiden's bruised hands in his, and bathed
As mother might her child's, nor could
Claudia his tender care repel. "Begone,"
He cried to the attendants, "nor intrude
Without due summons here."

He watched the train
Obediently depart, their footsteps died
Upon his ear, and a deep silence came,
Which for a while he did not dare to break :
Then as the pent up torrent bursting rolls,
He told the passion of his labouring breast
With all the fervency of love and truth
That must be heard.

"Thou knowest, maid most dear,
That dwelling here in Antioch at thy side
From infancy, I never yet have dared,
(More sacred than the Vestal deeming thee,)
To plead with thee for love. I ne'er esteemed
My martial honours, my patrician birth,
My father's state in Antioch as fit means
To win thee for my bride. Nor jealousy
With venom'd fangs e'er fastened on my heart,
For fancy never pictured thou could'st lend

Thine ear to mortal lover. Thus I lived.
I deemed thy presence hallowed our city,
And I most blessed when still from time to time
I saw thy white veil glittering in the sun,
Beheld thine eyes with pity all divine
On misery cast a glance, and thy prompt hand
The welcome gift bestow. I sought no more
But only thus to cross the common path
By thee unnoted, as it seemed to me.
I scarcely thought of thee as earthly maid,
Until I saw that thou could'st victim fall
To man's malignity—scarce knew I loved—
But when at distance tidings reached my ears
Of these fierce visitants to Antioch,
My soul was tortured by a sudden dread
That thou mightst be molested. I resolved
Homeward to turn my steps. An omen crossed
My path that cheered me, yet that urged me on;
A snow-white dove pursued by hawks passed o'er
Our troop of horsemen. Suddenly it fell
Weary of flight, and sheltered in my breast.
No augur did it need to read this right,
But plunging in my charger's flanks my spurs,
Advanced at utmost speed, nor all too late,
I thank the gods, arrived. O! what a sight

Greeted mine eyes the gateway when I reached ;
And this believe—my single arm had braved
That crowd tumultuous, had I followers lacked
To enforce obedience.

“Thee in safety placed,
I to my father’s presence hied, and urged
The exemption of the Consul from the power
These Censors exercise, and claimed it mine.
Then first I breathed my passion, and declared
Thy life and mine were one. I bid him choose
To snatch thee from the flames, or hurl me in.
For could I share thy fate no other way,
I would declare me Christian, would invoke
The fiery vengeance on my head, and bring
The Naz’rene’s shame upon our noble house.”
“Shame !” murmured Claudia with indignant thrill.
“Perplexed, dismayed he heard ; my mood he knows,
Intolerant of resistance, yielding nought
E’er to antagonist, although at times
Moved quickly by intreaty—but not here.
He yielded to necessity, and gave
All I dared ask, his sanction for a while
To hold thee from thy enemies, in hope
By fondest love to win thee not to be

Thine own worst foe, dear maid. The battle still
Was but half fought. I at the Censor's throne,
Unskilled in use of weapon save my sword,
All this long day have waged a wordy war
With foes whose tongues in venom were embued,
Deprived of thy dear presence all the while,
And only memory of thy beauty breathed
Into my speech persuasive eloquence.
Thy heart, sweet Claudia, is not hard as theirs,
O! let the accents that could Casca turn
Prevail with thee. O! surely I may dare
To snatch thee from the fire to these arms,
Thine only shelter in destruction's hour.
Why then so marble cold? What! not one throb
Of pity, Claudia, for thyself or me?
Turn not away in scorn. Existence hangs
On thy acceptance of my poor devotion."
"Existence!" cried the maiden with disdain,
"Know all thy darkened soul esteems as life
I utterly despise, the boon reject—
Weary as thine my day, spent in bewailing
How thine officious hand had plucked me back.
This morn with thrill of joy I hailed the sun;
With bitter tears this eve I saw him set,
And these I owe to thee. Wouldst thou inspire

Or gratitude or love within this heart,
Haste to undo thy work. Some envious sprite
Of darkness made thee welcome such a task,
And leagued thee with him to defraud my soul
Of highest guerdon granted to our faith.
With speed restore it, and I will forgive—
Forgive thee these most tedious hours of earth,
Forgive the agony of fear I have felt,
Lest I should never reach the stake again,—
Forgive the torrent of thy idle words
By which mine ears have wounded been too long.
Back to my dungeon send me now, I pray ;
Thou seemest to think it much that I could pardon
The slave who cast me in that darksome vault.
Thou art far more mine enemy than he.
He robbed me but of light of day, but thou
Of light of Heaven ; for know, the foulest cave
That earth conceals more justly may compare
With this thy glaring palace thou so prizest,
Than may the gorgeous sunshine of noon-day
With faintest particle of light above !”
And here the virgin paused. A flood of tears
For the first time relieved her swelling heart ;
She turned away, and hid them in her veil.
Amazed and half indignant, Marcus heard,

His spirit proud and generous scarce could brook
To hear his love rejected, and the life
He prized so dearly, recklessly thrown down.
Yet can he not resentfully reply.
The sight of one so young, so beautiful,
In such deep grief, and still so fondly loved,
Disarms all wrath, and leaves him fain to soothe,
Yet fearful to offend. In gentle tone
He briefly spoke : " Thou art no captive here ;
I am thy captive, Claudia ; in thy hand
Thou hold'st thy life and mine. Vouchsafe to think
In the calm solitude that shall be thine
Yet further of my words. I quit thee now."
Then slaves who dared no more molest the maid
With malice vile, unto an upper room
Conducted her with silent reverence.

V.

MARCUS his sleepless couch with dawn of day
Impatient left, resolved again to seek
Her who had spurned him with a lofty scorn,

Moving him more than love from other lips
Had e'er moved yet. All that long feverish night
He vainly bid his beating heart declare
What charm, so far surpassing beauty's power,
Encircles her? What magic in her creed?
"Like her the soldier smiles on wounds and death,
Springs to the battle-field, and feasts on blows,
But not like her without one glowing hope
Of triumph and revenge. I never sought
My foe to be his victim, to sustain
His cruellest insults and his bitterest taunts;
Upon my dying pangs and cold remains
Invoking shame. 'Twere frenzy thus to act.
O! what doth Claudia's upward gaze descry
That makes all pangs that flesh and spirit know,
Thus sweet to her?—more than endured or scorned,
Sought out and welcomed. Not a thought nor act
Will I to other purpose lend or spare
Till I have solved this mystery, and learned
From her own lips the secrets of her faith.
Be there a Heaven to which she knows the path
I humbly following may with her pass in.
For this would I relinquish all my pride
Of martial fame, my pomp, my pleasures, all.
I cannot chain her down to earth and me,

Wings will I ask to soar with her on high.”
Thus musing, he her presence sought, but paused,
Half fearing to invade it, blushing chid
His cowardice, and entered in. The maid
In meditation sat, but when she saw
Marcus approaching, quickly she arose,
His steps she intercepted, meekly knelt
With downcast eyes in suppliant act before him.
Thus low abased, her fair lids fringed with tears,
Like lily prostrate laid by recent storm
That rears in former stateliness no more
Its snowy head, though earth-stained, radiant still,
And spangled o’er with dew-drops, diamond like,—
So looked the virgin in her changèd mood ;
And as the fragrance which the bruised flower
Can still emit, her sweet humility.
“Nay, do not seek to raise me till I tell
Why this my humble greeting I must make
In full acknowledgment of grievous wrong
Which I have done thee, and for pardon plead.
For most unseemly was in Christian maid
The scorn which yester even fired my speech.
Thou in thy Pagan virtue far outshinest
Her who from childhood hath professed to sit
At the meek JESU’S feet to learn His ways.

And that my thanks were due I freely own.
Thou didst show mercy 'mong the merciless,
And though compassion for my fragile flesh
Alone did move, such impulse is divine
As theirs was devilish. GOD approved thy deed,
And gave it deeper import, greater worth ;
For thus thou pluckedst me back from fate as yet
Too excellent for me, and won me time
For penitence and prayer, whereby I hope
To gain increase of grace, which later must
Again conduct me to the martyr's pyre.
But while so much of pride and passion reigned
Untamed within this breast, I was deceived
By the fond heart that deemed itself prepared
To die such holy death, and sore displeased
Him Whom I thought to serve." Pausing, she shed
A flood of tears repentant. Marcus gazed
Speechless with wonder, filled with fervent love ;
And bending o'er her, the bright locks of gold
That on her forehead fell, he swept aside,
And dried her tears, and said, "O ! wondrous maid
How can I answer thee ? a language thine
That never fell upon mine ear before.
Had not thy beauty and my love disarmed
My spirit of its fierceness, I last night

Could have replied, retorting scorn with scorn.
Now would I learn of thee to think, speak, feel.
Tutor my tongue, sweet Claudia, and impart
The secret of thy lowliness of soul.”
Then hesitated Claudia, and scarce dared
Something beyond the language of his love
To read in his request ; but when her eyes
Raising, she met his earnest, reverent gaze,
She felt that he was willing to imbibe
Truth from her lips. One swift-winged prayer ascends
Bearing her thanks to heaven that she was saved
For such a task as this, and yet again
More fully she perceived how blind, how wrong
Her angry passion when the zeal was curbed
That urged her on to instant death,—a rebel,
Not an obedient servant, patient, meek.
“O LORD and Master, show my sin forgiven
By kind acceptance of my service poor.
Let me not mar the sacred truths intrusted
Now to my skillless teaching. LORD, vouchsafe
To be Thyself the Teacher. Shed Thy grace
Divine on this untutored soul, as through
The casement breaks yon ray of morning sun,
Bringing us warmth and light.”

Then rising, she
Placed herself where the sunny beam gushed in,
He, the young soldier, sitting at her feet,
With look of deepest interest and desire
To learn what she may teach. And Claudia spoke
Of Him, the Crucified, Who came from Heaven.

Not stubborn nor unapt did Claudia find
Her scholar, for he had a generous soul
That welcomed lofty themes, and soared with hers
When she revealed high heaven unto his view,
The great white throne, and Him Who sits thereon,
And countless multitudes that hymn GOD's praise
With tongues that vie with many voiced waters,
Or thunder's roll from mighty hills repeated.
And his bold heart could beat for victory,
Obeying with alacrity when urged
To press towards the mark, to seek the prize
Of the high calling of a mighty GOD.
And gladly every sinew would he strain
To win a crown corruptible, which won

To noble rival he would freely cede.
It better pleased his liberal soul to hear
That in the Christian race they all might run
Who earnest strove. His soaring mind could reach
The thought of the incorruptible, and hail
Eternity with somewhat of the joy
That thrilled through Claudia's bosom, and suffused
Her eyes with light.—But can he welcome shame?
Yes—if his GOD have welcomed it for him.
On this her hope rests Claudia. Matchless love
Shall love and gratitude inspire, and then
Where is the offering love will not bring?
Where is the penalty love will not pay?
Where is the ignominy love will shun?
The pang that faithful love will not endure?

Less lofty hopes meanwhile in Marcus dwelt,
Hopes which full well he knows he may not breathe.
Be it her words convert him? this dark storm
Now overhead, will spend in time its rage;
Till then, his home shall Claudia's refuge be.
And wherefore should she still abhor his love
When he hath learned her faith? Fair days of peace
Again shall shine on Christians, and shall bless
An union holy grown in Claudia's eyes.

Thus fondly planned the youth in those first hours
In which the Christian maid her lesson taught,
Unweaned his heart from dream of earthly love.

“Enough have I imparted,” Claudia said;
“If thou wouldst further learn, to-morrow come
When past the midnight hour, and I will lead
Thee forth from Antioch to a Christian shrine
Where faithful brethren we shall find, unscared
By peril, still assembling there to hail
The dawn with hymns of praise, and earnest prayer
Against whate’er of ill the day may bring.—
O, how should I rejoice to mix once more
My voice with theirs !”

“Nay, if ’tis joy to thee
Then that alone suffices. We will go.”
The maiden paused, she shuddered, for awhile
Answered him not, then in low whisper said,
“But this may cost thy life !” Her cheek grew pale.
A scornful smile played like the lightning’s flash
O’er Marcus’ face. He looked in beauteous pride,
Like youthful deity of Grecian art.
“With thee, or for thee, Claudia, what is death ?
A thing to covet, not to fear !”

He passed
Forth from her presence, and the maiden stood
Awhile as one entranced, and life and motion
Suspended seemed—gazing where he had been.
Morn's loveliness had faded, heavy clouds
Fast intercept the joyous tide of light
Whose rays propitious had to Claudia seemed.
She felt the sudden chill, and tremor shook
Her limbs, and o'er her rushed such vivid sense
Of misery, that, sinking on the ground,
She hid her face within her hands and wept
Like one whose heart is nigh to breaking filled,
And agonized with grief. The bitterest hour
Was this of her young life. The tempter strove
With poison of despair to chill her veins
And drive the life-blood back. To die alone—
That could he not make dreadful, but to lead
All who most loved her to a hideous death
Her tender heart dismayed.

“ Have I no boon
Save fiercest pangs to give for gentlest love ?
Had I ne'er taken Cyril in these arms
His presence still had filled his home with joy.
Had Marcus left me to my fiery doom

I had not oped his path to early death!—
Ah! nature weeps—but faith looks up and smiles—
For visions she of angels can discern—
Bearing bright crowns of glory, hymning songs
Of sweetest welcome. Let me gaze with her.
On Cyril and on Marcus they descend
And wreath their brows with diadems of light.
Smiling they turn to thank me, and extend
Towards me their hands, and bear me up with them.
Regret, reproach stream not from their fond eyes,
But extasy of hope, excess of joy!"
Yes; faith hath triumphed, and her heart revives.
No longer prostrate in her dark despair,
The virgin raised her head, and with a glance
That seemed to pierce to heaven, upward looks,
Her arms extends, as one about to soar
Unto bright regions where are blissful homes
For those who are baptized in martyrdom.

VI.

THE maiden's mission is not yet fulfilled.
There entered, moved by gold, a slave, who said

A woman, most importunate, implored
To see the Christian maid in her retreat,
And closely on his heels she followed veiled,
And waited his departure ere she cast
Aside concealment. Then sad Apphia stood
To Claudia's eyes revealed. Mournful as e'er
Her countenance, but calmed the dubious, wild
Inquietude of eye; no more the frown
Of pain her brow contracted, nor her lip
Quivered uncertain. She hath ta'en her part.
Decision ever brings some taste of rest.
Yet not immediately did she declare
The reason why she came. Her opening words
Were, "Noble Claudia, wherefore art thou here?"
With modest dignity the virgin said,
"My GOD hath willed it so. He yet hath work
For me, His servant, ere I enter rest.
His bidding I await." Upon the maid
Admiring Apphia gazed, exulting cried,
"I knew the shameless tale had nought of truth
That said thou couldst thy virgin pride forget,
Of death grown fearful, or entranced by love.
O, spotless creature! thou hast answered well,
I am GOD's messenger (though most unmeet,)
To tell a task assigned to thee alone,

If thou the presence canst endure of wretch
So vile as I am !” On her knees she sank.
“ Whence these wild words to being frail as thou ?”
Said Claudia in amaze. “ I pray thee rise.”
“ Thou know’st not half my baseness,” Apphia cried
With tears of shame. “ I, when I heard thee plead
I was no Christian, in my heart believed—
Believed and trembled—left thee to thy doom.
Say, will thy GOD forgive ?”

“ He surely will.

Thus His Disciples fled, thus thrice denied Him
One the most favoured, who wept bitterly
His timid sin, and thou dost also weep,
My sister,” Claudia said, most tenderly
Casting her arms around her, and her cheek
So wan and wet with tears she fondly kissed.
“ Angel of peace ! I will not dare to doubt
Thy words of mercy, nor thy pardon given.
But yet a further purpose brought me here.
The wretched Caspian ! thou already knowest
All he hath suffered of despair and pain—”
“ And lives he still ?” “ Ay, in his agony,
Not of the flesh but spirit. Home returned,
I did not dare to let him see his child,

But when the funeral rites I had performed,
I sat me down in silence near his couch.
He beckoned me towards him, and inquired
Where I had spent the night. I saw his heart
Had told him long before. Nought I withheld,
But all thy history and my own disclosed.
He feebly groaned, then waved me from his side,
And mournfully I sat, and mused on all
The sin I had discovered in my heart,
On all its black ingratitude to thee,
And how foregone its solitary hope
Which thou hadst stirred. How could I now aspire
Ever to be where thou and Cyril were?—
And not a doubt invaded my belief
That thou hadst passed from earth, until there came
A breathless slave, with wonder to narrate
The history of thy strange deliverance ;
How Marcus boldly plucked thee from the stake
And still was pleading warmly for thy life.
What conflict of emotion filled my breast,
What tumult stormed it! Claudia, thou wilt shrink
To hear an envious thought first moved to joy.
Then thou wert not with Cyril! O! my heart
More freely beat, for I had yearned and craved
With envy and despair for bliss I deemed

By thee enjoyed. Compassion next awoke,
And I rejoiced to know thy tender limbs
Were by the flames unscathed. For the first time
All enmity expired, and I had prayed
Tenderly for thee, Claudia, in that hour
Had I known how to pray, but so distraught
My brain, so shaken my belief, that now
I knew not to what God to offer prayer.
Our Deities must look in wrath on thee,
And all who with thee share thy proud contempt.
'Twas meet that they should hurl their thunderbolts
Upon your rebel heads, and vindicate
Their fanes deserted and their outraged shrines.
And be thy GOD the true one and Almighty
Yet dared I not for mercy turn to Him,
For still it seemed that they who serve Him best,
Love Him most deeply, ask not nor expect
Aught at His hands save death, and shame, and
 woe."

"O! do not thus mistake His gifts," exclaimed
Claudia, in tone of zeal. "Our GOD is Love!
All merciful, all gracious! and earth's trials,
Her fiery trials are light afflictions all,
Nor worthy to compare with weight of glory
Reserved in Heaven." Her eloquent rebuke

Heard Apphia with a silence that gave not
Denial nor assent.

“ I almost feared

Thou wouldst reject the boon of life, if won,
Thy purpose seemed so madly set on death.
While thus abstractedly I mused, I heard
Caspian repeat my name in accents low.
I bent, and placed my ear close to his lips
To catch each feeble sentence, and he said :
‘ Go speedily, and seek the holy maid
Who won our Cyril to the Christian faith.
I too believe, and am resolved to die
Invoking Him, that Nazarene despised,
Upon whose breast my spotless child reposes.
He told me he would pray for me in heaven ;
And doubtless hath, else why hath hate expired,
And whence this peaceful hope to be forgiven ?
O ! hither would some Christian Priest repair,
Impart the mysteries I once abhorred,
Then GOD would free my spirit. Go, inquire
Of Claudia how to attain such gracious boon.’
My doubts took instant flight ; at once I felt
A wish as fervent as his own to embrace
That faith we had reviled, and I am come

To beg of thee instruction, pardon, love.”
“All shalt thou have,” replied the maid, her face
Beaming with heavenly joy and tenderness.
“What my best counsel?—Think’st thou Caspian’s life
Is yet of many hours?” “To human eyes
He waneth fast.” “Then must no time be lost.”
Awhile she mused irresolute, then spoke :
“The abode of one who ever foremost proves
To engage himself in services of peril
I must reveal. The aged Fabius seek.
He dwells upon the hill that overlooks
The gate of Daphne, near the lofty palm.
Declare my name, and say that I beseech him
To hasten to thy home, to soothe the pangs
Awakened conscience feels ; this holy man
In all things can instruct, and quell despair.
Now if I trust thee too much, GOD forgive me !
If any harm betide him through my words,
GOD will avenge the deed.”

She faltering paused,
And to her alabaster cheek the blood
Rushed quickly. Apphia read her sudden fear.
“Doubt me no longer, Claudia. I am true.”
“Sister, I will not doubt thee, go in peace.”

VII.

THAT night did Claudia sweeter slumber taste
Than had refreshed her wearied spirit since
The days of tribulation had arrived.
It fell with eve upon her heavy lids,
And for awhile each hurried thought enchained ;
But as it gave new vigour to her frame
Her mind woke up ; thick coming fancies passed
Successively before it ; one alone
By memory retained. Light grew her sleep
And restlessly she turned, and in her dream
Already she and Marcus held their way¹
To join the Christian company, and on
And onwards still they mount an upward path,
No end in view, all dark and rugged first.
And frequently they stumbled, but each lent
The other constant aid with watchful love,
Till light dawned on them bright and brighter growing,
And they, advancing further in its stream,
Had bathed them in its radiance till their robes
Were shining as Olympus' winter garb

¹ See Note H.

Of virgin snow. And still they upward pressed,
Their joy of heart making their speed seem slack
Although their feet now barely skimmed the ground,
And gazing on each other, they perceived
Their flesh as luminous as were their robes,
And either heart discerned the other's thoughts
Without the aid of words. But both with shame
Beheld, despite their lustre, still unblanched
Some lingering stains. Each saw the other's grief,
And tears that bathed their faces; Claudia cried
With trustful hope: "O! let us not despair.
The Lamb's pure blood shall wash these spots away."
Then with redoubled zeal they upward strove,
The goal seemed near at hand, for she beheld
The venerable Fabius, who prepared
With joy the feast of love. A beauteous child-
Came forth to meet them, holding in his hand
A palm of freshest verdure, on his head
A rosy chaplet, and about his neck
Were chains of fairest flowers. "Come," he cried,
"For we await ye. Come, and share our bliss!"
While "Cyril" faltered on her lips, she woke.

She started from her couch, and half believed
That Marcus had allowed the hour to pass

Unwilling to fulfil the ready vow
Of yesterday, cold to her lessons grown
By after thought ; regarding life's possession
Too precious for such frenzied forfeiture.
But gazing eastward she discerned no trace
Of light, and every star was still undimmed.
She watched the pale and patient moon, with thoughts
Of self-rebuke, and sighing, she exclaimed :
" These seem to do Thy will so calmly, LORD,
I so impatiently ! Curb Thou my zeal."
Then she arrayed her in her virgin white
Waiting the appointed time ; her frequent prayer
The youthful soldier's call anticipates.
Not tardy was his coming ; forth they went
Silent, unseen. The maiden took the path
Unto the Church, where three short days ago
(Not short to Claudia, tortured into years !)
She led the infant Cyril to the font.
As they moved onward 'neath the moon's mild ray
She could not but contrast the present hour
With the preceding night's dark misery,
Its moaning winds, wild skies, her steps oft-times
Perplexed for lack of light, the dread despair
Of her companion's heart. How blessed the change.
Now equal peril menaces, but all

Above, around, within them, is serene,
And the sweet influence of the hour is felt
By each young heart, for not one envious cloud
Obscured their vision, as each earnest gazed
Upon the other's countenance, and read
Hope, love, and joy, and fearless enterprise.
True to a soldier's hardihood, the youth
Could not advance on danger with dismay.
The martial guardian of the maid he felt
Rather than her meek pupil, nor could doubt
His power to defend should foes assail.
As little fear knew Claudia, all her thoughts
Bent on high conquests now to be attained.
"This is the path to victory," she mused,
"And he how like a victor moves! The crown
Of war's stern triumph oft hath decked his brow,
Her palm hath graced his hand. This path shall lead
To purer trophies, to unfading wreaths."

This the fulfilment of her visions seemed,
For travellers on the road to martyrdom
Such sweet imaginings as soothed their pangs
Would often visions deem in gratitude.
She looked to heaven as hoping to discern
That path of glory and that verdant palm,

And Marcus asked, "Fair Claudia, dost thou see
Some presage of good fortune in the skies?"
The maiden half in mockery smiled, then sighed,
For scorn by pitying love was put to flight;
She thoughtfully replied, "Perchance by thee
My vision shall be rightly read." In tones
Low, rapid, yet distinct, nought of their speed
Relaxing, as they went, the maid revealed
The dream that was so sweet she wept to wake.

The gates of Antioch passed, the maid began
To chant her morning psalm with sweetest voice.¹

PSALM LXIII.

My GOD, Thou art my GOD, Thy face
Early I seek to sue for grace.
My thirsty soul to Thee aspires,
And Thee my longing flesh desires
As in a barren land and dry,
Where no sweet water brook is nigh.

I look for Thee in holiness,
O! let Thy power and glory bless,

¹ See Note I.

Better than life Thy kindly love,
My lips shall praise Thy joys above.
To Thee I lift my hands on high,
Thee while I live I magnify.

Upon my couch on Thee I thought,
Returning light Thy memory brought;
Beneath the shadow of Thy wings
My heart secure rejoicing sings,
With Thee my soul is satisfied,
And songs of praise my lips divide.

VIII.

Now have they reached the church, and round the porch¹
The poor, the penitent are ranged, and these
For alms, and those for prayer in silence plead.
Amid the latter Claudia recognized
Apphia upon her knees: she did not mean
To pass her without gentle word of love,

¹ See Note J.

But Apphia stretched her eager hand to touch
Her garb, and whispered low, "Yes, Fabius came,
And GOD released his spirit. He had peace,
And I am here to seek it. Pray for me!"
Then Claudia's lips the kiss of peace imprinted
Upon her sorrowing sister's brow, and gave
Sweet acquiescence to the wish she breathed.
The maid moved onwards and approached the fount
Which in the centre of the atrium played,¹
And with the other worshippers immersed
Her hands in the pure element, a sign
In admonition of that solemn truth—
None but the pure in heart shall see their GOD.
Here her companion she must quit to join
Her Christian sisters, but she first addressed
One who with doubtful eye his presence marked.
"Good Lucian, let this youth a witness be
Of our most holy rites—untrained as yet
With us to worship, but in heart prepared
To seek the truth, and hail it found with joy.
Suspect him not of treason, for his soul
Is noble as thine own, too noble far
To sacrifice to devils, and to cry

¹ See Note K.

To those dumb idols which the heathen make,
And after fear. O, lead him to our GOD!"

Her earnest intercession Lucian moved,
And he the youthful soldier placed 'mong those
Who not yet fully taught or penitent,
Nearer to draw, as yet forbidden were,
Until they may presume in blissful hour
Freely to share the holiest mysteries
Of Christian faith. Claudia meanwhile repaired
With all the women of the company
Unto a gallery apart. Her veil
The eye of Marcus could no more discern,
But still his fond ear fancied 'mid the tide
Of those melodious voices that it caught
The notes of Claudia sweetest, while they pour
Their praise to GOD for grace bestowed on those
Who "did not love their lives unto the death,"
And sing high hymns of joy unto the Lamb.
And thus in peril's hour CHRIST's servants think
Rather of immortality than death.—

Now are dismissed the train of penitents,
The catechumens, all who may not taste
The symbols of the Crucified. Without,
Around the fountain tarry some; of these
Is Marcus, Apphia greeting him, drew near

To speak of Claudia with a grateful tongue,
Telling the links that bound them soul to soul.
With deepest interest Marcus heard, and learned
The faith, the hope, the love of Christian hearts.

The worshippers come forth, and fairest sight
That ever decks the heavens now greets their eyes.
The eastern sky was tinged with every hue
The sun delights to scatter when he wakes,
His morning gift to all the fleecy clouds
That wait his rising, like his worshippers.
The saffron-coloured moon not yet had set,
The bright and morning star was sparkling still,
The early breeze was up and on its wing
It bore the myrtle's perfume, and it played
Among the whispering palms. Orontes' strain
Amid sweet nature's choir was heard distinct.
Creation's worship in that buoyant hour
Was visible, was audible, and they
Who in the humble house their hands had raised,
Had sought the LORD Who promised there to dwell,
Now at the shrine that He Himself hath framed,
With one accord poured forth their full voiced praise.
Again the Christian hymn ascends.

“To God

Be glory in the highest—Peace on earth.”

But yesterday the knee of Marcus bowed
Before Apollo's shrine, his voice had joined
The songs that hailed the waking god of light,
And even now so glorious beams yon orb,
His heart such worship scarcely can renounce.
The Sun of Righteousness not yet hath risen
To him with healing in his wings; he views
The amazing contrast of this gorgeous world,
Acknowledged as the handiwork of God,
By those who teach him that the LORD of Life
And of creation's glory, walked the earth,
A Man of Sorrows, died a death of shame—
Their creeds he cannot reconcile. The maid,
Moving in anxious thought beside him, read
Not the conviction she had dared to hope.
She watched his looks, troubled and downcast now,
Now raised admiring to the orb of day.
And sudden she exclaimed, “He is no god,
Whate'er thy priests may teach. He veiled his face

When the meek JESUS died, and owned Him LORD."
But in his soul's perplexity the youth
Seemed most averse to parley. Grieved at heart
The maiden too grew silent, and she wept,
Not meaning to employ the eloquence
Of tears; 'twas hope had failed her, and they flowed
Against her will, and Marcus watched their course.
"Not e'en to dry those tears dare I deceive!
But, Claudia, weep not, give me further time.
E'en as yon sun may every cloud absorb
His noonday height attained, so may the doubts
Which yet distress me be dispelled ere long."

The tenderness, the patience of his speech
Touched Claudia deeply. "Surely he is changed.
Far more already is developed here
Than the mere soldier ready to fling down
His life for any cause that calls for war."
Still dared she on to the fulfilment look
Of her bright midnight vision. Hope revived,
And kindled on her cheek a crimson glow.
Marcus, rejoiced to see her sorrow pass,
In silent thoughtfulness the way pursued,
While Apphia joined her timid steps to theirs.
Resigned and penitent, she told the tale

Of Caspian's latest hour, and Fabius' words
Inspiring hope, and bidding her repair
Unto the porch where they had met; "And now,
O, heavenly maiden! banish me no more
From thy dear presence. Let me sit and learn
Truth from thy lips, placed lowly at thy feet.
No duty calls me now elsewhere, nor wife,
Nor mother more. O, train thou me for Heaven!"
Claudia with deep humility replied,
"I have to learn, not teach; but mutually
We'll lead each other onward, and may gain
Comfort and strength from friendly communing."

And thus resolved, together they repaired
Unto the Consul's palace, where alone
May Claudia dwell securely, and they sought
The maid's allotted chamber, there to spend
The day in prayer, not for themselves alone,
Nor only for the suffering Church of CHRIST,
But all in doubt and darkness straying still
Through the world's wilderness shall own a part.

IX.

A MESSENGER ere noonday Marcus sought :
"It is the Censor's will that thou repair,
Heading thy guard, unto the judgment hall.
There question they some Nazarenes who soon
All patience must exhaust, so stiffly bent
Are they on their own ruin. Sentence past,
'Tis thine to lead them to the circus where
Severus sits as Consul, rules the games."
Marcus recoiled, yet dared not disobey,
So much the soldier's discipline hath tamed
A will elsewhere imperious ; straight he called
His guard around him, and his mind the while
Ran on the novel lessons lately learned.
By doubt perplexed, there dawned a secret wish
Half moving self-reproach, and yet not stirred
By any wanton cruelty, to mark
How they whose prayers and praises he hath heard
Demean themselves with men. He reached the hall
And placed him silent near the Censor's throne.
None shall descry the struggle of his soul.
His soldiers throng the door. The Christian group
With pious fortitude await their doom.

They are prepared to answer if addrest,
Not forward to dispute. Thus Gallus spoke :
"To all Valerian's will hath been proclaimed.
Shall men whose honour, freedom, safety lies
In being Romans, dare to disobey ?
Will you refuse your Emperor your love ?"
"None love the Emperor so well as we,"¹
The Bishop Fabius said ; "witness our prayers.
For peace, prosperity, and length of days,
For a just judgment, and his people's hearts,
We daily plead with God. He may not ask
For further service of the heart or life.
To man we dare not yield it. Who shall love
Or honour Cæsar better ?"

"Who obey !"

Stern Casca thundered. "Hence and sacrifice."
Here was a pause as though they dared expect
Vile acquiescence. Lucian broke it first :
"If ye who sit in judgment, have command
Or to persuade or punish, you must needs
To punishment resort. Persuasion fails."
Mild, calm, intrepid were his words and mien.

¹ See Note L.

Lo ! at his judge's side he recognized
The youth so late within the Christian shrine,
And sought and met his eye, which instant shrank,
Although the gaze of Lucian did not speak
The language of rebuke ; nor e'en surprise.
" This pertinacious folly seals your doom,"
E'en Gallus cried, grown weary of vain strife.
" Hence to the Amphitheatre if all
Alike are resolute to dare the fang
Of beast enraged." " We are alike resolved."
" What strange presumption makes you rush on death ?"
" No strange presumption, but the fear of GOD."
" And thou, poor fool, hast children," Gallus said
To him who last replied, who taunted thus
Disclosed his inward source of constancy,
" My children have my GOD. He will provide
All orphanhood shall need." Casca exclaimed :
" Brave Marcus, call thy guard, and lead them hence."
The youth at this decree arose ; he paused¹
As for a moment Curtius must have paused
Ere his dread leap. Down from his seat he sprang.
He stood among the criminals, and cried,
Casting away his sword : " Behold me one

¹ See Note M.

Of these condemned, for I like faith avow.
With them in the Arena must I strive
Against your hungry lions, and I'll fall
So that no Roman shall have cause to blush,
For I am still a soldier, though of CHRIST."
One yell of indignation from the crowd
Greeted the youthful warrior's words—scorn, hate,
And bitterest imprecation on him hurled.
Allegiance did his very troops renounce
To him their favourite hero, but he braved
In silent fortitude the storm,—no more
In words his faith declared ; he stood among
His Christian brotherhood, his noble mien
Speaking his frank sincerity of soul ;
More calm, more temperate, but not less bold
Than he had ever proved on battle's eve.
His soldiers marked him free from shame or fear,
And all their love rekindling in their breasts,
Among themselves they murmured o'er a plan
To snatch him from the death he has incurred.
“ Let us but move him from the Council Hall,
We to the Amphitheatre will prick
With our long spears these Nazarenes abhorred ;
But him upon our shields will bear away
And plunged in Daphne's wood, some safe retreat

Will for a while obtain." Accordingly
They drive the Christians on to meet their doom,
And as they reach the vomitory's mouth,
Their arms embrace him whom they mean to save.
They clasp young Marcus, who perceives their aim,
And, struggling for his liberty to die,
Springs from their shields, over the people's heads,
Lights on the ground, and darting instant on
Gains the arena, and his sire beholds,
Who sits the bloody combat's arbiter,
A moment pauses and averts his face.
"What madman this?" Severus stern exclaims,
"Who unconstrained hath rushed on death?" "Thy
son,"
Shouted the people, and the wretched man
Trembled with grief. "Marcus! my son, my son!"
The youth revealed his face, and pitying viewed
The anguish of the sire he loved. "Withdraw,
For I must meet the Christian's doom of death.
Some other hand may give the fatal sign."
"Thou impious boy, obey thy sire's behest.
Quit the arena. Sit thou here by me—
This is my folly's guerdon. Well I read,
That fair magician whom but yesterday
Thou begg'st of me, hath trapped thee in her snares.

She—she shall die—ho! guard, hear my commands,
Hie to my palace—to the eastern wing—
In his apartments seek the sorceress,
And bring her quickly hither.—She shall die!”
“And I with her,” Marcus undaunted said,
“For now her faith is mine. Father, she mocked
My gifts of love and life. She hath a soul
A Roman soldier well may venerate.”—
“Now would I thrust this hand into the flames
For having snatched her from them yester morn.
Why idle I the time? Bind Marcus fast.—
The Christians drive within the circus—now
Let loose the beasts—and bid his eyes behold
The sport that waits them and his gentle love.
Recant, rash boy—it is not yet too late.
Thou hast thy life—nay, hers—what wouldst thou
more?”
“The martyr’s crown!”

“Degenerate Roman, shame!

At the Olympic games I’ve seen thee wear
The victor’s wreath—have thanked the gods, and blessed
Thy name, which now I curse!” At that stern word
Marcus was seen to writhe, but no retort,
No fond expostulation passed his lips,

Yet when the guards approached to bind his hands,
He waved them back, and in a tone that brooked
No altercation, said, "Nay, I am here
Judged and condemned already. Further trial
Awaits me not, nor are your bonds for me,
Content to meet my fate—I will not quit
My post, and who will dare to drag me hence?
'Twere worth your lives.—To Casca I appeal."
And some fierce haters of the Christians left
The crowd, and sought the judgment hall to tell
The Censors what was passing, lest there should
Be snatched one victim from the jaws of death.
Ere this the Consul's dread command had met
Obedience, and the savage beasts were loosed—
At first bewildered, on the crowd they glared;
Cowed by their presence, motionless they crouched,
Nor yet discovered their appointed prey.
Dreadful the inward growl prolonged—more dread
The yell that followed when to fury lashed,
And on to combat by their keepers urged.
The Christian martyrs wait their spring, nor seek
To elude, nor to encounter them with arts
By gladiators practised when they rush
On death for fame, on peril for reward—
Thus unresisting, Fabius, Lucian fell,

But all his native fire in Marcus woke,
And springing forward, though unarmed, he met
And wrestled nobly with his ravening foe;—
So nobly that the multitude proclaimed
Their approbation with fierce shouts of joy,
And aught less vile than Christian had he been,
Had raised their hands to give him back his life.
His wretched father, maddened at the view,
Rushed from the theatre to seek the guard
Who thither Claudia bring, by Apphia followed,
Who would not quit her more, but joyful hailed
The occasion granted to repair the sin
Of having once forsaken her. He seized
The virgin's hand, and dragged her frantic on,
And when she, trembling, asked of Marcus' fate,
Vouchsafed her no reply. The crowd gave way
As they advanced. The entrance they have gained.
He to the arena sped, and thrust her in
Where Marcus fought with lions, and he cried,
His voice with passion choked, "There, she is thine!"
The youth hath turned and clasped her to his breast,
Alas! no refuge in that fatal hour,
And heard her murmured words of mild rebuke,
"Thou couldst not think 'twas thine to die without me?"

One path, one upward path is ours," she said.
Ah! in that moment they alike forgot
All but each other and their hope of Heaven—
That moment of forgetfulness their last.

NOTES.

A. Page 2.

"A little child there was whom Claudia loved."

"A Césarée un enfant nommé Cyrille montra une constance admirable. Il nommait toujours JESUS-CHRIST, et ni les paroles ni les coups ne pouvaient l'empêcher de se dire Chrétien. Plusieurs enfans de son âge se déclaraient ses ennemis. Son père même le chassa de sa maison, lui refusant tout secours, et quelques uns louaient et admiraient ce père. Le juge irrité contre Cyrille, se le fit amener par ses officiers et pensa d'abord l'épouvanter, mais il le trouva intrépide et n'estimant rien en comparaison de la foi. 'Mon enfant,' dit-il, 'je te pardonne tes fautes—ton père te recevra chez lui; tu peux jouir de ses biens, pourvu que tu sois sage et que tu penses à toi.' Le bienheureux enfant dit, 'J'ai de la joie à souffrir ces reproches—Dieu me recevra—J'en suis bien aise d'être chassé de ma maison; j'en ai une plus grande. Je ne crains point la mort pour acquérir une meilleure vie.' Comme il parlait ainsi, avec une vertu divine, on le fait lier publiquement comme pour le mener à la mort, mais le juge avait donné ordre que l'on se contentât de lui faire peur. Quand on lui rapporta que l'enfant n'avait point jeté de larmes, ni craint le feu où l'on le menaçait de le jeter, il le rappela et lui dit: 'Mon enfant, tu as vu le feu, tu as vu le glaive; sois sage pour rentrer dans la maison et dans la fortune de ton père.' Cyrille répondit: 'Tyrant, tu m'as fait

grand tort de me rappeler; ton feu et ton glaive sont inutiles. Je vais à une grande maison et à des richesses plus excellentes. Dépêche-moi promptement afin que j'en jouisse.' Les assistans pleuraient, l'entendant ainsi parler, mais il leur disait: 'Vous devriez rire et me conduire avec joie au supplice;' vous ne savez pas quelle cité je vais habiter, ni quelle est mon espérance.' Il alla ainsi à la mort."—*Fleury, Histoire du Christianisme. Livre 7me.*

B. Page 8.

"He reverently observed whate'er was done."

"Three things were indispensably required of all persons at their Baptism; that is, a formal and solemn renunciation of the devil, a profession of faith made in the words of some received Creed, and a promise or engagement to live in obedience to CHRIST."

"The Catechumens were placed with their faces to the west, and then commanded to renounce Satan with some gesture and rite expressing an indignation against him. S. Jerome plainly alludes to this custom, when he says: 'In our mysteries,' (meaning the celebration of Baptism,) 'we first renounce him that is in the west,¹ who dies to us with our sins; and then turning about to the east, we make a covenant with the Sun of Righteousness, and promise to be His servants.' This renunciation was made three times. 'The Priest thrice repeating the solemn words of renunciation, bids the person to be baptized thrice renounce Satan in that form. Then he turns him to the east, and with hands and eyes lift up to Heaven, bids him enter into covenant with CHRIST.' S. Jerome styles Baptism 'a covenant made with the Sun of Righteousness, a promise of obedience to CHRIST;' and he so speaks of this ceremony, as to show it to be a distinct act from the renunciation, though they both tended to the same end, because different rites were used in expressing them. For in renouncing the devil, they had their faces to the west for symbolical reasons; but in making their covenant with CHRIST, they turned

¹ Furthest from the light.

about to the east as an emblem of that light which they received from the Sun of Righteousness. Cyril of Alexandria says, 'It was the custom of the Church to require a triple confession of CHRIST of all those that proposed to love Him and came to His Holy Baptism.' S. Ambrose makes this triple confession to be rather answering three times, 'I believe,' to the several parts of the Creed. 'Thou wast asked,' says he, 'Dost thou believe in GOD the FATHER Almighty? and thou didst answer, I believe. Thou wast asked again, Dost thou believe in our LORD JESUS CHRIST and His Cross? and thou didst answer a second time, I believe. Thou wast asked a third time, Dost thou believe in the HOLY GHOST? and thy answer was, I believe.'

"I must observe further, that they not only administered Baptism by immersion, but also repeated this three times. Tertullian speaks of it as a ceremony generally used in his time. The original of this custom is not exactly agreed on by the ancients. Some derive it from apostolical tradition; others from the first institution of Baptism by our SAVIOUR; whilst others esteem it only an indifferent circumstance or ceremony which may be used or omitted without any detriment to the Sacrament itself, or breach of any divine appointment."—*Bingham, Book XI.*

C. Page 11.

"Near to the town they passed a sacred spot."

"A.D. 247, Babylas in the church of Antioch excluded the Emperor Philip with all his guards on Easter Eve, and would not suffer him to pray with the faithful until he had set himself in the place of the penitents, and made confession of his crime."—*Bingham.*

"S. Babylas, évêque d'Antioche, après avoir confessé, fut mis en prison et chargé de chaînes. Il y mourut, et voulut être enterré avec ses fers. Avec lui moururent trois jeunes enfans qu'il instruisait."—*Fleury.*

"After Babylas, a Bishop of Antioch, who died in prison in the persecution of Decius, had rested near a century in his grave, his body by the order of Cæsar Gallus was transported into the midst of the grove of Daphne. A magnificent church was erected over his remains, and

a portion of the sacred lands was usurped for the maintenance of the clergy and for the burial of the Christians of Antioch, who were ambitious of lying at the feet of their Bishop, and the Priests of Apollo retired with their affrighted and indignant votaries. As soon as another revolution seemed to restore the fortunes of Paganism, the Church of S. Babylas was demolished.”—*Gibbon*.

D. Page 19.

“She issues forth
Bent to infringe the merciless decree
That Christian corpse no burial rite shall find.”

“No act of charity is more magnified by the ancients than this of burying the dead, and therefore they many times ventured on it, even to the hazard of their lives. In times of persecution and in times of pestilential diseases this could not be done without great danger, and yet they never scrupled it in either case. Asturius, a Roman senator, took the body of Marinus, the Martyr, from the place of execution, and carried it on his shoulders to the grave.

“Sometimes they ventured to steal away the bodies of the Martyrs in the night, when they could not otherwise either by money or intreaties get liberty to bury them: as we learn by the Epistle to the Church of Lyons and Vienne by Eusebius, where the brethren express their profoundest sorrow and grief, because their enemies would not suffer them to bury the bodies of their martyrs.

“There want not instances in the ancient Martyrologies of some who became Martyrs themselves on this account, for their excessive charity to their brethren.”—*Bingham, Book XXIII.*

E. Page 30.

“When Claudia stood before the Censor’s throne.”

“The office of Censor was revived by Decius, and no one was exempt from his censures but the Consuls, the Prefect of the city, and the eldest of the Vestal Virgins.”—*Gibbon*.

F. Page 32.

"To Casca, to a mortal sacrifice."

" 'Croyez-moi, Pionius, votre probité et votre sagesse font que nous vous jugeons digne de vivre. Il est bon de respirer et de voir la lumière.' 'Et moi aussi,' dit Pionius, 'je dis qu'il est bon de vivre et de voir la lumière, mais je le dis de celle que nous désirons. Nous ne quittons point par mépris ces présens de Dieu, mais ce que nous leur préférons est beaucoup meilleur. Plût à Dieu que je pusse vous persuader de devenir Chrétiens !' Quelques uns dirent tout haut en s'en moquant, 'Garde-toi bien de le faire, de peur que nous ne soyons brûlés vifs.' 'C'est bien pire,' dit Pionius, 'd'être brûlé après la mort.' 'Sacrifie !' Il répondit, 'Je n'en ferai rien.' 'Pourquoi non ?' 'Parceque je suis Chrétien.' 'Quel Dieu adores-tu ?' 'Le Dieu tout puissant, qui a fait le ciel et la terre, tout ce que le ciel et la terre contiennent, et nous tous, et nous donne abondamment toutes choses que nous connaissons par Son Verbe JÉSUS-CHRIST.' 'Sacrifie au moins à l'empereur.' 'Je ne sacrifie point à un homme.' "—*Fleury, Livre 6me.*

G. Page 34.

"The vestal priestess comes, Laodice."

"The privileges of the Vestals were great, they had the most honourable places at public games and festivals. They had the power of pardoning criminals when led to execution, if they declared that their meeting was accidental."—*Lempriere.*

H. Page 68.

"Already she and Marcus held their way."

"Montan eut une vision. 'Il m'a semblé,' dit-il, 'que les centurions étaient venus à nous ; ils nous conduisaient par un long chemin, et nous sommes arrivés à une plaine immense. Nous sommes venus en un lieu lumineux, nos habits sont devenus blancs, notre chair encore plus blanche que nos habits, et tellement transparente que la vue

pénétrait jusqu'au fond du cœur. En me regardant j'ai vu quelques ordures dans mon sein. J'ai cru m'éveiller, et dormant toujours j'ai rencontré Lucien. Je lui ai raconté ma vision, et lui ai dit : Savez-vous que ces ordures signifient que je ne me suis pas accordé avec Julien ? Là-dessus je me suis éveillé.' A.D. 259.

"Jacques vit en dormant l'évêque, Agapius, qui faisait un grand festin et témoignait beaucoup de joie. Lui et Marien y étaient appelés comme à une agape et ils rencontrèrent un enfant, l'un des deux jumeaux qui trois jours auparavant avaient souffert avec leur mère. Cet enfant avait autour du cou une couronne de roses, et tenait à la main droite une palme très verte. Il leur dit, 'Et où allez-vous si vite ? Réjouissez-vous. Vous souperez demain avec nous.' A.D. 259.—*Fleury. Livre 7^{me}.*

I. Page 72.

"The maid began

To chant her morning psalm with sweetest voice."

"The Sixty-third Psalm is called by the ancients by a peculiar name, 'the Morning Psalm,' because it begins with these words, 'O God, Thou art my God, early will I seek Thee,' and was always used in the old Antelucan Service.

"S. Chrysostom says, 'The Fathers of the Church appointed it to be said every morning as a spiritual song and medicine, to kindle in us a desire of God, to raise our souls and inflame them with a mighty fire of devotion, to make us overflow with goodness and love, and to send us with such preparation to approach and appear before God.' Athanasius once or twice recommends this Psalm to virgins and others as proper to be said privately in their morning devotions. 'Rising early in the morning, sing the Sixty-third Psalm.'

"The original of Antelucan Assemblies in times of persecution, the Christians being afraid to meet in public.

"Now though it was necessity which first gave rise to these assemblies, yet the Church in after ages thought fit to continue them."—*Bingham, Book XIII.*

J. Page 73.

"And round the porch
The poor, the penitent are ranged."

"The distinction of the penitential classes was first made about the middle of the third century. The *fientes*, or mourners, were rather candidates of penance than penitents, strictly speaking. Their station was in the church porch, where they lay prostrate begging the prayers of the faithful as they went in. Tertullian says, 'They were used to fall down at the presbyter's feet, and kneel to the friends of God, and entreat all the brethren to recommend their petition, and intercede with heaven for them.'"—*Bingham, Book XVIII.*

K. Page 74.

"The maid moved onward and approached the fount."

"The Atrium was an open space or court before the church with a fountain in the midst, as a symbol of purification for such to wash as entered into the church; an admonishing emblem of that purity of soul with which men ought to enter the courts of the most holy God. The use of holy water, a fond imitation or corruption of the former, if it owe not its original to the sprinkling with holy water according to the heathen custom."—*Bingham.*

L. Page 81.



"None love the Emperor so well as we."

"'Vous devez aimer nos princes, vous qui vivez sous les lois Romaines.'—Acace répondit: 'Et qui aime plus l'Empereur que les Chrétiens? Nous prions continuellement pour lui, afin qu'il vive long temps, qu'il gouverne les peuples avec une puissance juste, que son règne soit paisible; ensuite pour les soldats et pour tout le peuple. Mais l'Empereur ne doit point exiger de sacrifice, et nous ne lui en devons point. Qui pourrait sacrifier à un homme? Nous détruisons les dieux que vous craignez après les avoir fait vous-mêmes.'"

"Le garde du temple dit, 'Obéis-nous.' Pionius répondit, 'Si vous avez ordre de persuader ou de punir, vous devez punir, puisque vous ne pouvez persuader,' " &c. &c.—*Fleury, Livre 6me.*

M. Page 82.

"The youth at this decree arose, he paused."

"Adrian served in the guards of the Emperor Galerius Maximian. It fell to his lot to superintend the execution of thirty-four Christians. As he stood by wondering at the constancy with which these men suffered for the cause of CHRIST, his heart was suddenly touched. He threw away his arms, and sat down in the midst of the condemned, saying, 'Consider me also as one of you, for I too will be a Christian.' Then he was carried to prison with the rest."—*Mrs. Jameson's Legendary Art.*

March, 1853.

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